1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115 Eighty-year old Martha Page,* a small and frail woman, remembers her African grandfather and the strange "talk he use tuh make wid two udduh slabes on duh plantation."

"Wen dey git tuh gabbin, yuh couldn unnuhstan a wud dey say," Martha informed us. "Muh gran sho hab funny name fuh call ting, too. He lub tuh hunt an fish an he use tuh hab a lill piece uh wood wid a string on each en tuh kill squhrel an hawk wid. He call it he 'wah-hoo bahk.' Sometime he use tuh sing a song das staht off like dis, 'Dody boda do dandy.' He say it mean, 'We come fuh make waw tuhday.' "

754 "Did your gran tell you about magic and conjure?" we asked.

789 "Dat he did. I sho wuz sked ub im wen he use tuh talk bout dem ting he people in Africa could do.[15, 22a, e, 48] Some ub em could make yuh disappeah, he say, an some could fly all roun duh elements an make yuh do anyting dey wants yuh tuh do. Wen I growd up, I discobuh dat plenty uh duh tings gran tell me is sho nuff true."

"You've had personal experiences?" we queried hopefully.

"Me an muh sistuh bote. Witches use tuh ride uh regluh till it seem she gwine swivel away an die.[60] One day a man tell uh tuh tro salt on duh bed an no witch would bodduh uh. So dat ebenin muh sistuh sprinkle a heap uh salt on uh cubbuh.[60a] Soon attuh we git tuh bed, I seen a cat come [60] right in duh doe an look me in duh eye. I try tuh holluh but uh couldn make a soun. Nex ting I know sistuh wuz poin watuh in muh face.

"I dohn take tuh witches," said Martha Page. "I dohn mine ghos, cuz I caahn see em as I wuzn bawn wid a caul.[4] But I dohn want no mo sperience wid witches. Das wy uh sprinkle salt down ebry night uh muh life."

The broom precaution against witches is also believed in

* *Martha Page, 606 Zubly Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

White Bluff

HUGE, MOSS-HUNG OAKS FORM A CANOPY AND CAST filigreed shadows upon the White Bluff Road, which passes directly through the quiet Negro community of White Bluff, eight miles southeast of Savannah.

Winding roads turn from the main highway and terminate in the various sections which form the settlement and which are known as Nicholsonboro, Rose Dhu, Twin Hill, and Cedar Grove. The sections east of the White Bluff Road are on the Vernon River. It is here that many of the inhabitants make their living by catching crab and fish which they sell in the city markets. West of the highway the narrow roads lead through thickly wooded areas of great beauty. Along these roads families have cleared small tracts and built their homes, reserving garden space for flowers and vegetables. In the summer wild crepe myrtle trees, with blossoms as luscious a red as the heart of the watermelon, contrast colorfully with the bright blue paint on the doors and trimmings of some of the houses.

The White Bluff Road, which for two miles forms the main street of the community, passes the houses of other residents set well back from the road. Most of them are small and unpretentious but well kept. At intervals of perhaps half a mile are three rural grocery stores; farther along is a whitewashed church with red and blue glass windows, and at the farthest extremity of the settlement is a similar but larger church.

The inhabitants, of which there are approximately four

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Grimball's Point

GRIMBALL'S POINT, LYING AT THE NORTHWESTERN end of the Isle of Hope on the marshes and creeks that run from the wide Skidaway River, is one of the characteristic spots of Savannah's rural landscape. The lowland spreads grassy flats against the horizon; the squawks of marsh hen rise from the long reeds on Grimball's Creek; all the year round a familiar sight is the Negro fisherman sitting patiently in his small bateau or trudging with his plump catch up an old oak-shaded shell road.

A few white residents maintain comfortable summer homes at Grimball's Point, but the settlers scattered on the southern part of the point are Negroes, former slaves and descendants of slaves who once worked the great plantations on the Isle of Hope and other near-by islands. Some of the inhabitants are employed on Grimball's Point hunting preserve, while others are farmers or fishermen. Their abodes are frame bungalows with front porches or little shacks of one or two rooms, but most of the dwellings are surrounded by sun-dappled yards, fenced with boards or chicken wire. Each has its backyard pump as there is no running water.

Of the ten Negro families on the point, young and old believe in signs and auguries. "Catfish Tom" William, Habersham Gibson, and Solomon Gibson professed to know that "some signs sho do wuk." Thomas Tuten, who has spent his fifty-eight years on the island, warned us that "yuh sho has tuh watch people cuz dey kin do yuh." Aging Aunt Cinda Smith, employed on the old Wiley place, is given the respect

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Wilmington Island

UNCLE JACK TATTNALL* AND UNCLE ROBERT PINCKney ** are river men. For many years they have earned a frugal living by casting for shrimp or crabbing or fishing in the Wilmington River. Apparently they are in little fear of the elements. Winter or summer, at whatever hour of the day or night the tide is "right," they are on the water in their bateaux.

Many of the Wilmington Island Negroes depend upon the river for their livelihood. In leisure hours, here as in other sections, skillful fingers carve or weave to pass the time away. We were fortunate in being shown a walking stick (Plate IIb),[A] carved some years before by an old fisherman of the island.† The delicately detailed figure of a human being formed a third of the stick, with hair, features, fingers, and shoes carefully executed. The narrow thin figure stood stiffly gowned in a garment edged with a saw-tooth design.

For some time we had been anxious to obtain interviews with Uncle Jack and Uncle Robert, who were among the oldest inhabitants of Wilmington Island, in order that we might learn something regarding beliefs and customs that had been handed down to them. Until the present time, we had met with little success.

A barbecue to be held in the side yard of Celia Small, one of the islanders, at last gave us the long hoped for opportunity of meeting a number of the residents at one time.

* *Jack Tattnall, Wilmington Island.*
** *Robert Pinckney, Thunderbolt.*
† *Property of Edward A. Sieg, 128 West Jones Street, Savannah.*

A. [See Category 322, plate following p. xxxii-B--Analyst]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

with slavery, the mention of cotton in Sea Island folklore and literature generally has negative connotations.

Today neither cotton nor rice is grown to any extent on or around the Sea Islands. Rice was gradually eliminated by the many disastrous floods and storms which frequent the Carolina coast. Cotton was abandoned in favor of more lucrative means of support, especially since the cotton-picking machine eliminated the need for harvesting of cotton by hand. The primary crops now are edible produce, including soybeans, peas, okra, tomatoes, corn, peanuts, and watermelons, and many folk narratives focus on the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of these crops.

Another major food source is fish, shrimp, crabs, oysters, mussels, clams, lobsters, conchs, and sharks, all of which the islanders prepare expertly and variously. Fish has always been important in the local diet. Consider, for example, a resident minister's account of the varieties available around Edisto Island in 1800:

> The creeks, rivers, and seas which indent and surround the island furnish at different and appropriate seasons of the year, a great variety of excellent fish—as the larger drum, the small black drum, bass, rock-fish, sheephead, cavallie, bonnetta, salmon-trout, yellowtail, ale-wife, croaker, plaice, flounder, skate, pike, shad, and catfish, and many others, suitable for the table. Porpoise and sharks frequent the creeks and surrounding waters. Some of the latter are seen and caught of an enormous size. They are considered as just objects of terror by the negroes. And yet, although the fishermen continue hours together waist deep in water, and have often the misfortune of hooking them, they escape with impunity.[30]

Crabbing and fishing are so much a part of Sea Island culture that many children learn the fine art of casting and netting as early as three years old. Some residents who earn their livings from fishing practice an old African method of netting fish in mass. An elderly gentleman explained to me that his grandfather had taught him to beat on the sides of his boat to attract fish and porpoises to the area (see Appendix 1). The porpoises scare schools of fish ahead of them, and the fish are then caught in the nets. In a variant of this method, a group of fishermen will wade out into the water to beat on their drums or other instruments. The more noise they create above and below water, the more

A. [For Appendix 1, see Category 226, pp. 151-155--Analyst]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

fish they attract to the area. One has to be careful in this venture, however, because the drums may also bring sharks.[31]

Though much sustenance is taken from the rivers, the streams, and the ocean, another food source is provided by creatures that live at the edge of the water, such as "cooters" (slider turtles), bullfrogs, terrapins, alligators, and sometimes rattlesnakes (not everyone will eat the latter because the flesh is believed to be poisonous if the snake was angered before it was killed). The flesh from the cooter is particularly pleasing to some islanders owing to its unusual taste and tender texture. The alligator is a rare delicacy, now, being no longer as readily available as it was in the past. Yet Ber Gator[32] and his swampy home continue to be lively topics in folklore and literature. Under the slave regime, according to one source, when the islanders were denied the use of guns and powder, they hunted the alligator armed only with a long hook. They entered his hole at low tide and, at considerable risk to their lives and legs, dragged the alligator out and killed him quickly. The skin was saved to sell and the flesh taken home for cooking.[33]

This dangerous method of hunting alligators is reminiscent of an even more dangerous method once used to trap the giant boa constrictors and pythons in Nigeria. One Igbo hunter explained to me that the snake hunters rubbed their bodies with a scent taken from captured boa constrictors and pythons before entering places which they were known to inhabit, in order to prevent the snake from smelling their approach. Once the quarry's hole had been located, either the hunters dragged him out with a hook or, at greater risk, one man would insert a leg into the snake's hole, allowing the snake to swallow it up to the hip. When the leg was pulled out the snake came along helplessly, unable to move with the hunter's leg in his mouth. The hunter quickly drew his knife, slit the snake's jaws and throat, and thus recovered his leg. The account of this method of hunting was corroborated by some Nigerians and called a lie by others. The hunter who told me about it, however, swore that it was indeed done. Like the alligators in the United States, the giant snakes are captured in Nigeria chiefly for their hides. The larger the snake, the more dangerous his capture is, and thus the greater the price paid for his skin will be.

The woods provide a further excellent supply of food for the Sea Islanders. Many of the more remote islands still abound with large ducks, partridges, wild turkeys, geese, and many other edible birds. Likewise, the woodlands are alive with game. Deer often roam alongside the roads in the early morning.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

159 one of her friends, who accused her of taking some tobacco which Miss Myma clearly could not have taken. Her friend attacked her viciously and called her some scandalous names. With each insult Miss Myma replied, "You de right, darlin," or "Sho will, honey," or "I know you ben tell truth for sho, baby." Finally, the friend looked rather foolish, throwing out insults and having them accepted so calmly. So, clearly feeling unfulfilled because she had not had the satisfaction of arousing Miss Myma to any angry word play, she left kicking up dust and looking back over her shoulder as she stalked down the sandy lane from Miss Myma's house. I had seen Miss Myma at her best in heated arguments over far smaller issues before; thus I asked her in amazement why she had not retaliated and defended herself forcefully. She took her pipe from her mouth, shook it in the direction her friend had taken, and replied thoughtfully that that particular woman was a fool, and she left fools in the hands of the Lord.

159 Miss Myma was apparently in her mid to late seventies when I met her. She told me that she "forget" how old she really was, but she 123 could come close if I could tell her how old some of her childhood friends were. In spite of her age, she remains one of the most active people on the island. She taught me to crab, net, and fish. In fact, I caught my first dogfish while fishing on the banks of an island stream. The thing actually had feet and barked like a dog when I caught it on the hook. When I asked if the fish were edible, the children standing on the bank laughed at my ignorance before they said no.

Every day was an exciting day with Miss Myma. We got up around six o'clock and drove the fifteen or more miles to James Island to get a cup of coffee. Miss Myma liked to ride, and I loved the invigorating smell of the Sea Island morning air. If we were going to the creek that day, we would gather our gear beforehand. If we were going "bog-
159 ging" for crabs, which was Miss Myma's preferred way to catch them, we would get our sticks and go to the creek after the tide had gone out.
123 Bogging for crabs is hard work; one even needs specific shoes for this venture. When the tide goes out, many crabs are left in the various
• 226 nooks and crannies of the creek bank and bed. The stick is used not only for support but to prod into holes to scare out the crabs. When one is found, it is provoked into clamping onto the stick and then pulled up and dropped into a large bucket. If the crab is ornery and refuses to clamp onto the stick, the stick is used to hold him down. He is picked up from the back and his two front claws are quickly clamped together;

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

159 123 226 then he is thrown into the bucket. In a good season one gets more crabs than one can eat in a couple of hours. If the season is bad, one can stay out in the creek all day in the sultry island sun and still have only a few "po, skase [scarce]" little crabs. During the bad seasons it was usually I and not Miss Myma who finally had to come in. She could walk miles in those creek beds. One day, when we had come upon a pool of water deeper than the regular creek bed, and thus not emptied by the tide, she decided she would teach me to throw a net. She stooped, pulled out her net, stationed part of the midpoint in her teeth, stretched a portion along her arm, circled the net a bit for balance, let go of the string, and twirled the net up over the small but deep hole of water. The net circled, fanned out, and landed on the pool. "Good throw, Miss Myma," I cried out. She replied, "Got em, a mullet for sho, Pat." It was true, she had netted several mullet, but what she didn't know was that she had netted a snake as well!

159 123 226 133 Crabbing can be dangerous for those unfamiliar with "ocean time." While one can bog for crabs when the tide goes out, one can net a few when the tide starts back in. I learned that the trickling sounds heard only at certain times are made when the nooks and crannies are being filled with water. I also learned that the tide can be deceiving because it comes in very slowly. Once we had been walking on the muddy creek floor for hours when I casually observed that the water was covering my shoes; a little later I noted that it was over my ankles. I thought I was just walking into deeper puddles and thus continued to practice my netting. Then I found that the water was beginning to hit me above my knees. Suddenly I became alarmed and looked back down the creek the way we had come. It was only then that I realized that the water was not only filling the creek bed but had covered the marshland, and there was no clearly perceivable way back to the higher ground. Frightened, I yelled out to Miss Myma that we were going to drown. She stopped, looked up and down the creek, pulled a bit of Day's Work chewing tobacco out of her pocket, took a good bite, offered me some, grinned when I passed on it, and finally said, "Guess time we fe go now." She had crabbed in that creek since she was a child, and she knew every bend and angle of it. Without her experience, however, I believe I would have panicked and perhaps drowned because it takes only minutes for the tide to rush in and fill the creek at any given point.

159 538 Miss Myma's presence was imperative at storytelling contests,

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

There is continuity, too, in the religious services. Worship is shared with others who appreciate the place of religious exercises in the traditional structure of beliefs and values. The services continue to be alive, energetic, and thoroughly enjoyable. Sermons and prayers are still passed on orally from one generation to the next, rather than written down. The sermons are delivered by ministers who are natives of the island area, who speak the language, and who value the old traditions.

Basketry and marketing remain important, for two reasons. They have economic significance, but pride has also become a factor. The children learning the basket traditions now are being told that the patterns they are weaving repeat not only the patterns woven by their grandparents but those of their African ancestors before them.

Fishing and netting continue to provide livelihoods for many, though they are endangered by development and pollution of the waters. The islanders are "river and ocean" people. They gauge their workdays by the sun and by the ebb and flow of the tides. Some continue to use the marsh mud to fertilize their gardens. Others go to the banks of the ocean recesses to sit, fish, and tell tales of Ber Rabbit, tales often so vivid that many of the children swear they have actually seen him bounding down the island paths. The fishing techniques and the love and respect for the ocean are being passed on to the children along with the tales, myths, lies, and legends of island life.

The folklore and literature of the Sea Islands, unsurprisingly, are more alive on the remote islands than on the more commercialized ones. Though television, with its cartoon characters and talking pictures, is an arch rival for even the most gifted teller, on stormy days and dark, gloomy nights no one is permitted to watch television because the islanders believe that it draws electricity and increases the possibility that their homes could be struck by lightning. During these times the children are gathered and told tales of Ber Rabbit, hants, ghosts, witches, and hags, and no television program can hold an audience as spellbound as some of the island storytellers.

Gullah, the island language, is being affected by population changes, television, and the schools. Children are seldom named after days of the week any more, but most are still given two names: one to use at school and one to use at home. Many of the words familiar to the older generations are not being passed on to the children because the islanders, like most parents, want their children to attain good educa-

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Appendix 1

An Interview: Catching Fish

226 17

The ancient fishing methods explained in this interview are reminiscent of those found in Nigeria and other African countries near large bodies of water. I actually observed the drumming and spearing technique among the Igbo and Ibebio of northern Nigeria. Juanita Jackson, Sabra Slaughter, and J. Herman Blake also write of this continuing fishing practice on the Sea Islands.[1]

[115]

The informant was a retired tradesman and a very important member in the church community. He said that he learned these practices from his father, and his father had learned them from the "old people" before him.

The interview has been edited slightly for clarity.

Mr. Daniel Dent
Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina
1983

226 124

INFORMANT: To catch mullet fish, we goes in the river. Everything still. The water still. Make a few throw with the cast net, and you haven't catch anything. So you get up on the side of boat and you beat on side with you oars, or paddle. And you just keep beating—[you] call em dolphin, we call em horsemen—then beat until the porpoise come around. After the porpoise come around, then the mullet fish will come to the shallow water. [Then] you cast for catch em. You don't catch much fish without the horseman. The porpoise have to be around. The only way to get the porpoise, man—[you] don't see them—you beat some, on the side of the boat, and they'll hear you miles for miles under the water.

[P. 15]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

•226
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Fishermen often travel among the islands in rowboats. These two men are preparing to row from Yonges Island to Wadmalaw.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

226
124
INTERVIEWER: How does the sound go?

INFORMANT: (Tapping out a steady beat on his chair) You can't hear the sound.

LISTENER: You can't get the right sound. Under water de different sound.

INFORMANT: (Taps again) Something like that. (Taps again) Here's the beat. This the way it sound. But a little bit lighter because e not on the water. You on the boat with a paddle. So that the way you get your fish when you fishes in deep water. You call the dolphin to the shore by paddle beating on the boat. So many time I done that for a living—until I can't number em.

INTERVIEWER: You called the dolphin three things?

INFORMANT: I call em a horseman or a porpoise. The way I learn, I learn from the old people.

INTERVIEWER: You call him a horseman?

INFORMANT: Uh hum. In fact, e *is* a horseman for a workman. See? You understand what I'm talk about now?

INTERVIEWER: A horseman?

INFORMANT: A horseman, yeah. Someting that most people call [a thing with] four feet. But the man [part] is a man. All right?

INTERVIEWER: Do you know any other fishing methods?

INFORMANT: I knows gig [gill] net [smoke fishing]. The way I use to, when I come up [was growing up], I was too poor to buy a lantern. So we just [went] out [in the] winter time, and those who had tires on they car, [if the tires were] no good, we use that for a light. And we goes in river. Sometimes the wind blows, e blind you with the smoke. But we had manage to catch many bushel of trouts and many bushel of fish with four-prong or three-prong gig. Caught many bushel fish that way. Just use a little tar for light by night, and we gelds [stick] fish in the water.

LISTENER: Catch em by stick em with that fork.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know any other ways?

INFORMANT: Yeah, I had did this back in Hoover time when tings was bad. We didn't had, couldn't get a cast hook the way I want em. I had takes someting we call hog wire and put em cross the river. When the tide comes up, you goes and cut muckle mish [bush] and drop em behind the wire to hold the fish on that side when e [the tide] goes down because we didn't had a gill net to put over

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 155]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

501
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142

[226]
[868]

Sea Island children are intimately familiar with the ocean and learn the art of casting and netting as early as the age of three.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

• 226
124 river. Time was for tight, we couldn't buy a gill net. So what I be do, take hog wire and put em across em when tide low. When the tide get high, we take the bush and put em in the front of the wire. When the water start for go back, the fish can't get through, de stop on that side.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

rham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1940), pp. 321–22. The original source for this order is the *Report of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1865–66, Exec. Doc. 11, p. 10.

23. Guion Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands with Special References to St. Helena Island, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), p. 18.

24. Though many writers have stated that rice was a Sea Island crop (see, for example, Wood, *Black Majority;* and Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource"), Professor Charles Joyner has indicated to me (through personal communication) that rice was grown not on the Sea Islands but in rice fields adjoining nearby mainland rivers. Rice requires fresh water, and the flooding and draining of rice fields require freshwater rivers moved by ocean tides. Thus Sandy Island had rice fields but the ocean islands did not.

25. Wood, *Black Majority*, p. 59.

26. Ibid., p. 59.

27. Ruth Finnegan, *Limba Stories and Storytelling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

28. Rice is normally eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in variation with different meats, gumbos, greens, and sauces, many of which are still prepared and eaten on the islands in traditional fashions. Two carry-overs, for example, are a kind of okra soup called *ofey okra* in Igbo and a turnip green dish prepared with bits of meat, onion, hot peppers, and pepper sauce that has its counterpart in Yoruba, Igbo, and Ibebio cultures. In Africa these vegetable and meat dishes are eaten with *fufu* or *gari*, a soft substance about the consistency of bread dough. On the islands, instead of fufu and gari, corn bread is served with the greens or okra soup; small bits are pinched off, mashed together with the fingers, and then dipped and rolled in the vegetable sauce.

29. Guion Johnson, *History of the Sea Islands*, p. 26.

30. Quoted in Crum, *Gullah*, p. 70.

31. This practice was also observed by Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake; see "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource."

32. *Ber* is the Sea Island form of the word *Brer*.

33. Crum, *Gullah*, p. 55.

34. Quoted in ibid., p. 60.

35. This observation may in part answer a question posed by Richard Dorson, an avid researcher and collector of black folktales. Dorson observes that southern blacks drew a fair portion of their folktale material from the barnyards, fields, and woods which formed their environment. "Why they neglected such familiar denizens as the coon and the possum," he comments, "in favor of the rabbit and the fox, and preferred the buzzard over the owl, remain teasing questions" (*American Negro Folktales* [New York: Fawcett, 1967], p. 67). Perhaps the questions are not "teasing" at all. The animals of the tales are intensely interesting to the islanders because they have had to study these animals so closely to learn to hunt them. According to some of the island storytellers—people who are also known for their hunting skills—such animals as the buzzard are revered for their patience. They are often used as foils to much smarter animals like the monkey or the rabbit. On the other hand, the rabbit is renowned for his cunning and his illusionary and evasive skills. Though his teeth are sharp, he has no

3; Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

539 (795) [226]

that the old preacher got away from there so fast that he, who was also running with all his strength—couldn't keep him in sight.

At least this story had its explanation. The next day the old preacher and the young man were told that two Negroes after a fishing trip had stopped under a tree in the cemetery to divide their fish. One had a sack full of fish. The other had only two which he had dropped on the ground as he opened the gate of the cemetery.

Truss Gawd

539 776 825

"Plat Eye? Yas'm. De ole folks is talk about Plat Eye. Dey say dey takes shape ob all kind de critter—dawg, cat, hawg, mule, varmint—and I is hear tell ob Plat Eye taking form of gator. I ain see dem scusing one leetle time. You know dat leetle swampy place hind de Parsenage? Dem does call dat Parsenage Branch. Well, one time I hab meh bloom on me en wuz clamming dem days, en de tide been berry late in de ebenin. Hit wuz dusky dark when I hit de Parsenage Lane—light dusky dark. I wuzn't feared none tall. You see, ez I say, I hab meh bloom on me in dem days. En I pass de Cap'n barn en stable. Dere he wuz wid Allan son milkin. En I say: 'Good even, Cap'n Bill!' En he gin me back meh word. En I bawg t'ru dat deep white san en I passes de graveyard entrance en I leabes de [gate] open en enters dem dark woods whey de moss wabe low en bresh in you face. En I bin think about Plat Eye. De mind come ter me it wuz good time ter meet em.

"Den I bresh dem weepin moss aside en I trabble de wet mud in meh bare feets en meh shoe bein tie ter meh girdle string. En, Miss Jin, when I bin come ter de foot lawg I could see same ez I see yo now. I could see de foot lawg—dat same old cypress what been dere now. He blow in dat las big September gale. En I bin see Mr. Bull Frawg hit de water—ker plunk! En a cooter slide offen de lawg at meh feets. En, Miss Jin, clare ter Gawd, I bin fer look up at dat cooter den I turn meh eye up en dere wuz a cat—black cat wid he eye lak balls ob fire en he back all arch up en he tail twissin en er switchin en he hair stan on end. He move backward front ob me cross dat cypress lawg. En he bin big. He bin large es meh leetle yearlin ox. En I talk ter em en try fer draw close. En I say ter em; 'I ain fer fear nuttin!'

"En I'se try fer sing: 'He carry me t'ru many ob danger. Because he fust lub me. He guard gainst hant en Plat Eye. Because he fust lub me!'

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Rev. G. C. Brown

THOSE WERE ROUGH DAYS

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My wife and I've been here since '38. No pastor had lived here the last forty years before we came. And of course by not living with the people, they couldn't know their need and their desire. They wanted somebody to come and live with the people—that's why we came.

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The first thing I found here was extreme poverty. That was during the days of the Depression, and there was no work except the WPA project. That white schoolhouse out there was built as a WPA project. The men on the farms were working for seven cents an hour. Oh yeah, seven cents. And the women, five cents.

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The men plowed; the women did all the farm work. That time they didn't have planters to plant the potatoes. They cut the potatoes, dropped them in the field, and the men did all the work with the plows. That give pretty good farm employment. You had a number of men running plows, the women go along and drop the potatoes, and that give them a good day's work—several days' work in springtime. That give them employment during the planting season.

And the cabbage plant out by hand. Nowadays some have a planter. Some children worked then, but they didn't have too many children that time. There hadn't been so much marrying and going on.

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Those were rough days. Food was short, scarce, didn't have much. The most they ate those days, they ate rice, grits and canned tomatoes. They bought their tomatoes at the store. They were cheap then. They bought the grits. Some made their own grits. They had a few mill. And they used to raise their own rice. There were a lot of rice farms around. They had a way of cleaning it and milling it.

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Most of 'em were poor. Had no income. Very little income. They lived out of the creek. In the summertime they had crabs and shrimp, and in the wintertime had oysters. You could buy right at your door about three times a week, undressed shrimp—five cents a plate. In the wintertime we buy

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41 Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

fish. People went into the streams and they hauled out fish trying to make a living. Anything they could do to make a living.

They used to gather moss--this same moss. Every month a man came along with a big truck to pick up this moss for mattress factory. They had pretty good moss business. They had three or four sales a year. They had a special way to cure the moss. Dig a hole in the ground and put hot water on it and that'd make it cure quicker.

The homes were poor. Lots of the homes were built out of logs. They go into the woods and cut a log about six feet, then put another six feet. And the frame was cut out of the woods, most of it. Sills, uprights, everything--cut right out of the natural woods. And for a long time they'd be lined with newspapers and any number of houses burned down during the winter. You know those were hard days.

The chimney was built out of stick and mud. They built the frame from the ground up out of wood, and they took pine straw and mud and daub that inside and out. Kind of clay-like. They build up this fireplace and give it a shape--outside and inside. Then they make a fire and bake it. It get kind of hard like brick-making, and they'd use those for heating. That was a common thing here then. They could put a rock or something down and cook in the fireplace.

Then in the summertime most of 'em cook outdoors. They'd lay two green logs together and make a fire between and put those pots on. That was the cooking utensils.

Sometimes a rain would come, wash out a piece of the chimney in three places. It was dangerous. Sometimes a house catch afire and burn down from the chimney. Pine straw was the binder with the clay. I don't think there's one around this island anywhere now. It's been years since I've seen one.

When I came all these roads were dirt. I think that there were only three cars in my churchyard except mine. That was the general thing all over the island. They used carts and that little tacky--pony, little horse, you know. Almost everybody had a pony, marsh tacky they call it.

Rev. G. C. Brown

WORLD WAR NUMBER TWO IS WHAT CHANGED THIS ISLAND FINANCIALLY

World War Number Two is what changed this island financially. The army came and got the men, carry 'em to war. Well, the farmer had to change his plan of farm. He had to go to tractors--didn't have the man-

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Alice Wine

WE DO EVERYTHING FOR WESELF

159 Old times we never buy food. Man, you *never* used to buy nothing that
935 time. Money use to never worry people but pay church and buy little things
241 what you want or something like that. People raise the apple, they raise the fig tree, raise the plum, all kind of different thing. But now you got to see money. Money! You got to go for make money to buy. Is harder now. You
(435) got to work so hard to get a little bit of money. In that time you could get a quart of grits for two cents.

My daddy farm for heself. He raise he own food. We raise all vegetables. Something to keep in the barn in the winter. He plant corn, plant peas. He have sons plow. I do some too. And after we do all that, then they harvest 'em there in the barn. Then you ain't have to work in the winter.

(443) Them times just a couple of stores, but you have to walk over seven
(438) miles to it. They sell food, but when you can plant your own, you make
(231) your own living. We have plenty chicken and have eggs and have plenty cows and have the milk. And my mother made butter--we own butter. Have we own churn and everything. Do everything for weself. So we never buy.

(251) Those times people raise the tomatoes and the okra and can it, And they do that right now. They can it, they fix the bean, they dry the beans and the peas. They cut up the okra and they dry that.

159 My mother didn't never buy no kind of food. They make soap. They
735 make plenty soap. But what they make it out, I don't know. They grind
(438) corn and make flour and grits. And we have the mortar and beat the rice.
388 And meat, we kill the hog and put 'em in salt. End of the year, they put up hog. Kill the cow and have beef meat.

252 Daddy go in the creek and get we tub of fish--plenty fish that time.
251 Get the fish out the creek--oshters, crab, mushel. Then we use to get them
226 cookies five for a penny. Now cost penny a piece.

(294) For clothes my daddy and mother they buy the cloth and make it. My mother had a machine and he do all his sewing.

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. Joe Deas

I BEEN GOING IN THE CREEK FOR FORTY-ODD YEARS

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•226 Fishing, yeah man, I been doing that for years. Get 'em with net; get 'em with line. Go down and push the boat overboard, go to bail 'em out, and go out casting. We go to Hut Creek, Willis Creek, then out to the sea. Great Lord, that's miles and miles out there—way out past the place they call Kiawah, then go out to the south. Get your whiting and trout. For mullet you go in the night. Course if you got a net, then you can go in the day and catch shrimp.

[286] I make nets—knit 'em with cord and needle. Make my needle out of
[227] wood, board, tin. You can make 'em out of palmetto—take a branch of pal-
[324] metto and cut 'em out of that. I make all most things myself—boat, net, two-wheel cart. If you ain't got that, you have to ride the ox

I do everything from the time I could turn around for myself. I been going in the creek for forty-odd years. Catched a ton of fish. Gone around
[432] and sell 'em to different people—make a living I gone and got a license.
[434] Have to go to customs house and get license to go in the creek—get the fingerprint and all. When you come back from the creek, if you don't have enough to sell, you got enough for your family to eat.

That's the way we had to struggle in this world. But thank the Lord, we're here yet.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

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227
501

[p.46]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23, Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. Benjamin Bligen

I DO MY OWN WORK NOW

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The first work I used to do was work on our own farm. I worked to help my father because they really had a hard time to raise us, and we just had to get out and do what we could to help in them days. We had to plant a garden.

Then my daddy was a fisherman, and I began to go in the river along with him and he teach me how to throw net, so I finally learn how to. And (226)

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[p.47]

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

159 he teach me how to paddle a boat. After he died, I took it up myself. I did
● 226 the same thing: go in the river and catch some fish and sell it. Most of it is mullet fish, mullet and spots, and some catfish, all different kinds. Cast net. Run from three to four feet deep to maybe sometimes seven to eight feet deep. I go by myself or with my brother.

159 I began to do some carpenter work too. I was working along with a
(335) carpenter, and after a time I began to learn how to do some of the work for
(484) myself. So I finally try alone, and I made it all right. I do my own work now. I'm working at a block and pipe company--making door lintels and window lintels, all different kinds of stone.

(434) The best kind of money people can make is on electricity works and
(241) chanical works and maybe expert carpenters and bricklayers. Harvesting season in the fall, you can't make much because it's only about three or four weeks long. You can do all right for those three or four weeks. You can make it anyhow. But 'round May and June, that's about the best months of the year on the farm. October you start having maybe some string beans. Then you sit 'til next year in May and June.

Mr. Benjamin Bligen

MORE LIGHT IS SHINING

I am forty. The look of the pudding is not the taste all the time. I have two children. I have a better time raising mine than my parents had raising us. Foods went up a lot, but still you can make it a little better now than you is in past time.

More light is shining. Can see more. Likewise you can do more and think more, 'cause I believe that more light is shining now than was shining in the past. And so help me God, I so glad that I can see some light. And I know there's more light for me. There is a bright light somewhere and I'm going to find it.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

133
22L

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

133
226

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

133
226

[p. 231]

505 weekly to bring persons to the mainland. Most inhabitants
[491] over forty remember these Saturday ferry trips to Charleston or to other islands to buy and sell their produce, arts and crafts.

433 Historically, the islanders were self reliant. Rice, indigo, and long staple cotton were resources that flourished well on the fertile soil, and brought substantial prices
[226] on the market. The ocean provided an abundant supply of crab, fish and shrimp, and the children learned the art of casting and netting at a very early age. Because most of
823 the islanders were fishermen, the ocean provided a topic
521 of interest and often evoked many natural responses ranging from earliest childhood encouters to near death feats.

132 Few Europeans inhabited the islands because of the heat
164 and the threat of malaria. According to Nichols (1976:20),

177 an important factor in the low numbers of Europeans was their
136 susceptibility to the malaria-bearing mosquito which thrived in the fresh-water swamplands. During the summer months and fall, which consituted the malaria season, the landowners moved to homes on the ocean or further inland. West Africans, on the other hand, had a genetic tolerance for the malaria parasite.

175 During the period from 1730 to 1840, Blacks
161 outnumbered Whites by a substantial margin. For example, in 1800 there were 2,150 Whites and 12,400 Blacks in Georgetown County. By 1840, the county contained 2,200 Whites and 18,000 Blacks (Jackson et al. 1974:33). Thus a geographical isolation, social and economic independence, and marginal contact with speakers of
197 English outside the Creole community nurtured an environ-
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11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

plantations in 1862, reported that Thomas A. Coffin gave his 250 slaves twelve beeves in summer and four at Christmas, four barrels of molasses in summer, and from April to June, when work was heavy, two pecks of corn and two and a half pounds of bacon per slave.[28] He also regularly gave every hand a quart of salt a month and every man two "hands" of tobacco a month and four "hands" at Christmas.

In addition to the rations issued by the master, the slave might gather from the plantation creeks and rivers all the oysters and crabs which he desired. The practice in regard to the fish varied with the plantations, as will be indicated later.[29] Each family was also given a small patch of ground, about one task, back of the cabin to cultivate as desired. Most families planted three or four rows of corn and put the rest in potatoes. They ate part of the corn, but fed most of it to the pig and chickens which each hand was permitted to keep. Some planters on St. Helena even permitted their Negroes to have cattle. Nor did the hands usually eat their stock and poultry, but sold it to the master or to the island storekeeper or to merchants in Beaufort.

When Captain Basil Hall visited a plantation on St. Simon's Island in 1828, he found that the master's family was supplied entirely with poultry and eggs by his Negroes at these prices: eggs, 12½ cents a dozen; chickens, 12½ cents each; fowls, 20 to 25 cents each; ducks, 50 cents each.[30] They were given the liberty to carry their produce to a better market if they could find one. With

[28] MS in Port Royal Correspondence. In Archives of U. S. Treasury Department.
[29] *Infra*, p. 142.
[30] Hall, *Travels in North America*, II, 232.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

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clothes. An English visitor at Hopeton noticed that whenever the mistress paid a visit to Savannah she was overwhelmed with commissions from her slaves who wished to obtain the latest fads in articles of dress, "of which they are passionately fond." "The stuff must be of the finest quality, and many instructions are given as to the precise color or fashionable shade. White muslin, with figured patterns, is the rage just now."[288]

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The Negro spent a part of his spare time in simple recreation. Indeed, many masters thought that he spent most of it that way. If a tidal creek bordered the plantation, as was true of most plantations on St. Helena Island, the master permitted his people to fish freely for crabs, shrimp, bass, whiting, and catfish, sometimes, however, reserving for his own use the choicest sea foods, such as shrimp and whiting. It was seldom that a master permitted his people to go at will in boats upon the creeks, and only by special permission could they go upon the Sound for one of the most exciting of all water sports, drum fishing. In the fishing season, it was customary for the master to commission a certain number, usually three or four picked men, to do the drum fishing for the week, the fish, of course, being intended for the master's table. But when the men came in with a big catch, probably as many as five or six twenty-five pound fish, the fishermen not only had their reward from the catch, but the steaks were distributed among all the people as well. The slaves invariably considered the head the choice part of the fish. Even today it is not difficult to start an argument over who shall claim the head when a fish is about to be divided.

[288] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, p. 265.